SUBJECTS.

as prevailed in the neighbouring taluks of the Tinnevelly District.

Dewan's reply.—The Sanitary Commissioner will be asked to report on the matters mentioned by the Member.

53. Sanitation of the town of Trivandrum and suggestions for its improvement.

Mr. F. P. Fernandez (Member, T. I. C., Trivandrum) said that he had spent 33 years of his life in Trivandrum and 38 years in the Government service as a member of the Medical Department. During that time he had noticed vast improvements in almost all Departments of the State, but the change for the better noted in the sanitation of the Trivandrum town, excepting the attempts at house-scavenging, was *nil*. It was worse now than what it was 50 years ago, owing to the increased population which numbered 60,000 souls. The subject being in his line, he wished to bring before the Assembly a few of the very urgent sanitary needs that required immediate attention for the well-being of the citizens. Though one could not expect all the up-to-date improvements in sanitation, the Member hoped that some of the improvements to be proposed by him would meet with the approval of the Government.

The sanitary work of the town could not, like that of many other Departments, be expected to pay its way at the present stage of its growth. A sum of Rs. 6,000 was realised from house-tax, but this amount, together with what was annually allotted by the Government, was found quite inadequate to meet the pressing increased needs. The Government grant, which ranged from Rs. 39,000 to Rs. 42,000 per annum prior to 1083, was suddenly curtailed since 1084 to Rs. 25,000. Had the Government given sufficient time to the Committee for raising funds under Section 86 of Regulation III of 1076 and sanctioned the proposals of the Committee to levy taxes contemplated under that Regulation as per the Committee's letter No. 742, dated 18th June 1909, to meet the requirements of proper sanitation, the town would not have suffered as at present. To keep within the reduced allotment, the Conservancy staff had to be reduced by one-half, and this, to a great extent, was responsible for the present insanitary condition of the town.

Perfect sanitation, the Member said, fell under three groups, *viz.*, (1) scavenging and general sanitation, (2) provision for protected and abundant water supply, and (3) drainage.

As regards scavenging, the Member regretted that there was not a single public latrine or urinal in the

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

SUBJECTS.

whole town. For the Agrasala itself, where, the Member believed, about 3,000 persons were being daily fed, there was no provision for a latrine or urinal. The ordinary population of 60,000 had its occasional increases on festival occasions. Besides, Trivandrum being the head-quarters of many Departments, the people from all the Divisions invariably came to the town on business. The expenditure on sanitation in the town was not therefore wholly spent for the permanent population of the town. Besides the want of latrines and urinals for the use of the public, it was regrettable that the public institutions, with the exception of a few, were not provided with urinals. The Town Hall itself was an instance in point, where meetings, lectures and dramatic performances were being frequently held. Absence of latrines and urinals caused the fouling of the roadsides, lanes, and backyards of unoccupied houses. Scavenging was done by the Committee only in the Fort and Chalai Divisions on the separate cess levied, which was hardly self-supporting. Seven sites had already been acquired for public latrines in certain parts of the town, but the work of construction of the latter was delayed for want of funds. The recent Government order stating that the question of providing latrines and urinals might be dropped was hardly reassuring. The Penal Code provided punishments for people committing nuisance on the roadsides and other public places. A few stray cases were now and then being charged; but inflicting punishments without providing places for the calls of nature was not a justifiable action. Very often, a poor cooly who brought a load of merchandise to the Chalai Bazaar was caught committing nuisance, and when punished with a fine, he was found unable to pay it. The Government Hospitals and Dispensaries were the only public institutions that kept their premises clean and tidy. Latrines and urinals were provided and were properly supervised by the Medical Officers. The Member wished that the heads of other offices and institutions too would arrange for the latrines and urinals attached to those institutions being regularly kept in proper order and not allow the premises to be defiled, as was the case with some of them at least at present.

In regard to the provision for a protected and an abundant water supply, there were about 50 wells in the town without adequate provision of parapet walls, cemented basements to avoid percolation round the wells, and pulley arrangements. People used dirty buckets and ropes and very often contaminated the water supply. The number of wells compared to the population was hardly sufficient. The Member

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

SUBJECTS.

therefore said that either more wells should be sunk or some other measures for a general water supply should be undertaken.

Coming to the question of drainage, he said that all the crowded centres such as Fort, Chalai and Thycaud were provided with cemented open drains. But these, in most places, only served as receptacles of dirt, filth and washings from the adjacent houses. At night, they were even used as convenient latrine trenches. Fæcal matter combined with urine decomposed on contact with cement, especially when there was not a sufficient water supply to completely flush the drains. The result was corrosion of the drains, stagnation of the flow, and decomposition of the filthy stuff. The surrounding air was thus contaminated, and besides the bad smell, the public health was endangered. An adequate water supply was therefore indispensable if the drain system was to be continued.

Another desideratum in this connection was the want of proper levels and outlets to the drains. This also contributed to the stagnation of foul water in low-lying places, such as Chalai, Putharikandam channels, &c. The result was that, when an epidemic broke out in these parts, it did not leave the locality soon. The recent outbreak of small-pox and its persistent prevalence for over two years was an instance in point. It was a matter for regret that the Public Works Department took up works in connection with the sanitation of the town without consulting the Town Improvement Committee. An instance was to be seen in the drains constructed on either side of the Main Road from Puthenchanthai to Pazhavangadi, a distance of about a mile. Cemented masonry drains, though they added to the beauty of the town, were a menace to the public health in the absence of means for completely flushing them. Further, these drains were not continuous throughout but ended abruptly into many lanes, with the result that there were many cesspools on the sides of the roads and in the midst of dwelling houses. The drainage channel running through compounds between the Chalai Brahmin village and the Chalai Main Road had no outlet and was completely clogged at the northern end of the Chalai Main Road near the Valia Meleluthoo Pillai's house. This was the cause of the several cesspools and stagnant drains in that locality. Several private wells in the vicinity had become unserviceable to their owners on account of percolation from the cesspools. The above, as well as the Putharikandam Channel, which received the filth of half

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

SUBJECTS.

the town, had to be attended to early for the sake of public health.

Dealing with other minor sanitary arrangements, the Member made the following suggestions :—

1. A Committee should be appointed to inspect and report upon cremation and burial grounds and a register should be maintained of such grounds. Those that might be found unsuitable and likely to affect the health of the town should be removed to conveniently distant places, and plots of land acquired at Government cost, as was customary in other parts of the country. The grounds might be handed over to responsible persons, and in their absence, the Government might appoint watchers and levy a small cess for each cremation or burial, in order to meet the expenses of upkeep. Such an arrangement, besides improving sanitation, would help greatly in recording death statistics. Vital Statistics work was being done inaccurately and much time and labour were entailed on the Town Improvement Committee and the Health Officer and his staff in prosecuting people who failed to give the required information.

2. Some encouragement might be given to Female Sanitary Inspectors by the offer of honoraria for itinerant work among the masses. The Midwives and Nurses trained in the Victoria Hospital at Quilon might also be directed to take up rudimentary Hygiene as one of the subjects. There was every facility for it as the head of the institution was a D. P. H.

3. The sanitary condition of the Connemara Market sadly wanted looking into. The income derived from the stalls was just sufficient for the upkeep of the establishment. There were certain repairs, in addition to the annual maintenance, which required a sum not within the funds available with the Committee. The buildings, latrines, drains and the enclosure walls, were all much neglected. The stalls paid liberally and no additional rent could be thought of. Owing to the high rates, many stalls were left unoccupied, as there were enough of bazaars on lower rent outside the Market.

4. The disused tank at Poontheruvu, near the Sabhapathy Temple at Chalai, was left in a most insanitary condition and useless weeds were growing there luxuriantly. Its existence in that condition was prejudicial to the health of the people and was an annoyance, as the tank bunds were being used as latrines by most of the people there. The subject of this tank was pending the orders of the Government

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

SUBJECTS.

for some time past. Vide G. O. No. 187/P. W., dated 12-1-09, to the Committee. The Member proposed that the site of the tank should be converted into a healthy enclosure and handed over to the local Committee, who might utilize it as an evening bazaar for the sale of vegetables, fixing rents for its occupation, and deriving a source of income thereby. This would remove a source of danger to the public health and afford the public some convenience, as the want of a vegetable market in the town was sorely felt.

5. Control of food supply to the town was practically *nil* and there was no provision for it in the Towns Conservancy and Improvement Regulation. The result was that articles unfit for human consumption were offered for sale with impunity. This was also one source of danger to the public health.

6. The contents of the conservancy carts had to be taken to distant uninhabited parts for burial, but many private gardens in the midst of houses were being used for depositing street sweepings to be utilised as manure. He suggested a fee of four chackrams or more for each such cartload removed to distant parts. People converting waste lands might gladly buy them.

7. Uniforms, belts and badges should be supplied to the Conservancy staff to be duly worn by them during working hours, so that the public might identify them.

8. The work of the Committee was ever on the increase, due to the deliberate violation of the Conservancy Regulation by the people, owing to the nominal fines inflicted by the Magistrates on the offenders. The license fee for occupying a public street by the erection of pandals was two chackrams per day. If a person who occupied a public street without a license for 10 or 15 days were to be let off with a fine of 4 or 7 chackrams, he was a gainer by the violation. In regard to the T. I. C. prosecutions, the Member suggested the appointment of Honorary Bench Magistrates selected from the Members of the Committee. The Town Magistrate's file would thereby be lightened.

The Member concluded by saying that he had not exaggerated the insanitary condition of the major part of the town and that the fact would be evident on local inspection of the places referred to. To facilitate proper supervision over the insanitary areas and to secure better results, he suggested the appointment of a full-time officer as President. A European officer of superior status with sufficient power would be of advantage, but if that be

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

SUBJECTS.

found too costly, retired Peishkars or Judges might be appointed President or Vice-President with full powers, on payment of an honorarium or monthly allowance. Such officers might even undertake the work as a labour of love. By this arangement, the Dewan Peishkar would be relieved of his heavy work and better results would follow in the working of the Town Improvement Committee. In the Member's opinion, the Mofussil towns were in a far better condition than Trivandrum.

Dewan's reply.—The Sanitary Commissioner will be asked to report upon the matters mentioned by the Member.

VI. EDUCATION.

54. Defects in the present Educational system and suggestions for improving the same.

Mr. George Baker (Member, Kottayam Taluk) said that he had visited about 10 or 15 schools and interviewed the teachers, and that he would mention one or two of the difficulties experienced by them. The first was about the great delay in getting grants. In the case of the Aided Schools, as the grants represented the pay of the teachers, the delay meant great hardship to the poor teachers. He also said that grants were being refused on some ground or other, such as insufficiency of accommodation, want of furniture, and the like; and if the defects pointed out were rectified, the schools still did not get the grant, for some other defect was shown, which required to be remedied. In the matter of holidays also, he said that, unlike the Government Schools, the Managers of the Private Schools had no discretion. The Member concluded by saying that the Managers felt that their position was insecure, for, even if they worked up their schools to the standard laid down by the Code, they had not the assurance that the schools would be recognised and grants given to them for any number of years. He left it to the Government to do what they could to improve the situation.

P. K. Kesava Pillai, B. A., B. L. (Member, Trivandrum Taluk) said that the public mind had been very much agitated owing to the changes recently introduced in the Education Department by the operation of the Education Code and the School Leaving Certificate Scheme. Statistics showed that Travancore was not behind the rest of India in the matter of education. In the words of Dr. Mitchell, a very considerable volume of educational activity had been displayed here within the last 15 years. That was a gratifying circumstance and one that would make an outsider believe that, in the matter of education,

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly